STARLIN-BRIGHT-MITCHELL

BATMAN

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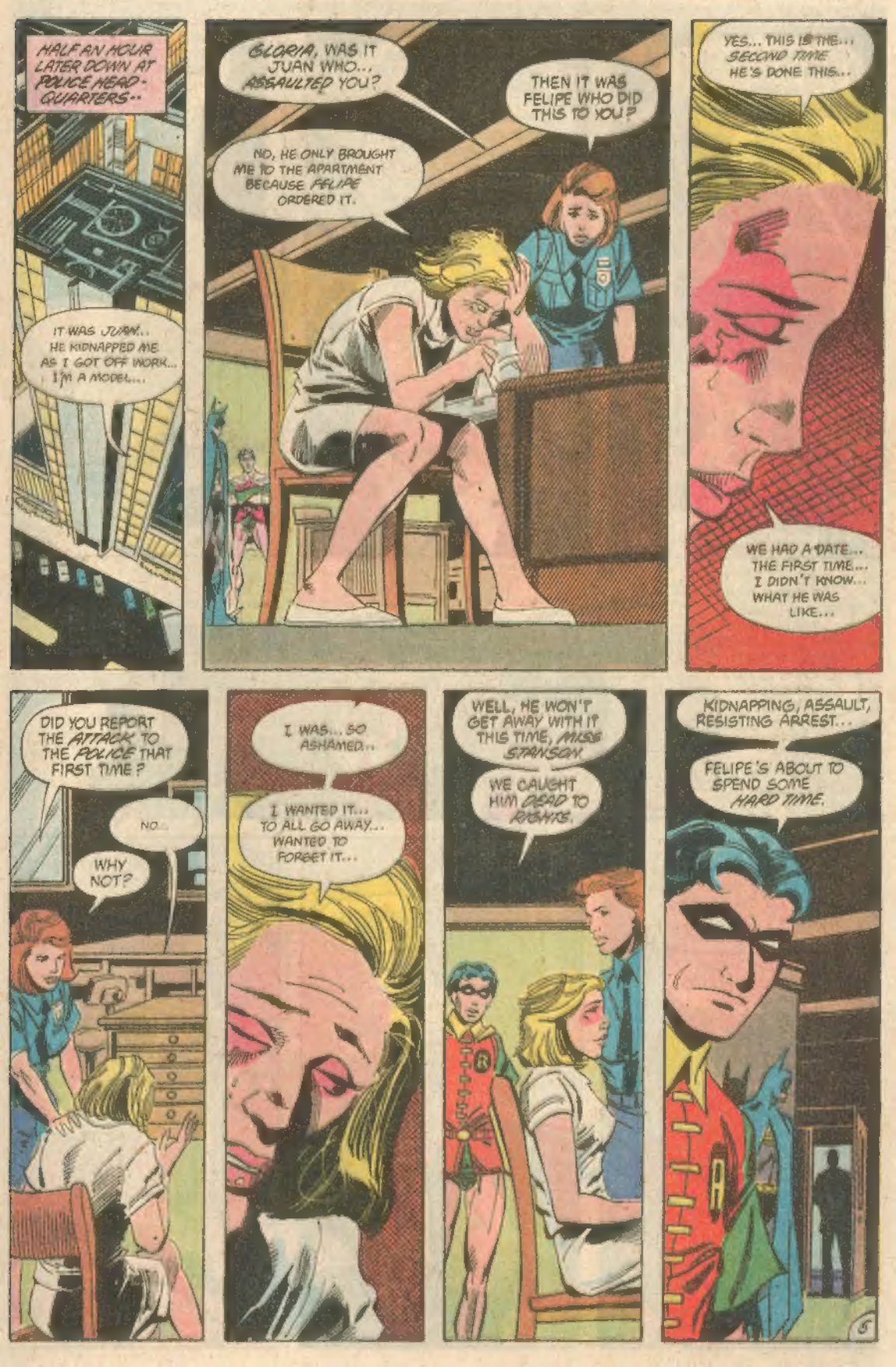
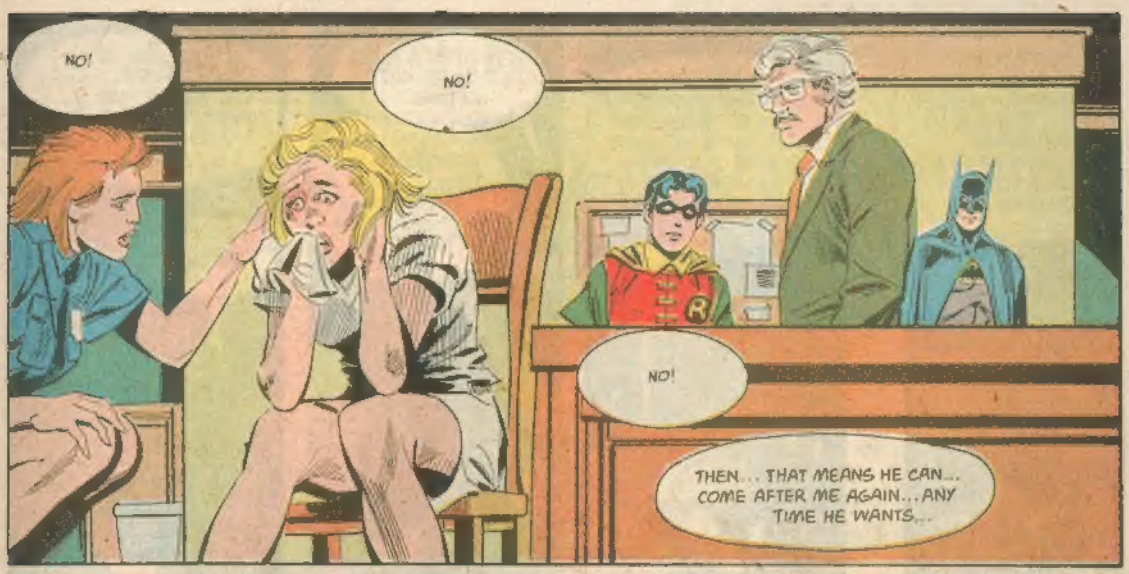
HE LANDS, JUST THE WAY I TAUGHT HIM, BALANCED AND READY FOR TROUBLE.
ONLY TROUBLE IS...THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANY-ONE AT HOME.
BUT THEN FELIPE GARZONAS COMES OUT OF THE BEDROOM.
MADRE DIOS! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
GET OUT OF HERE! VA!
LEAVE OR I WILL KILL YOU!
FELIPE HAS BOTH SIZE AND STRENGTH OVER JASON.
BUT THE LAD HAS GARZONAS BEAT HANDS DOWN IN SKILL AND SPEED.
2

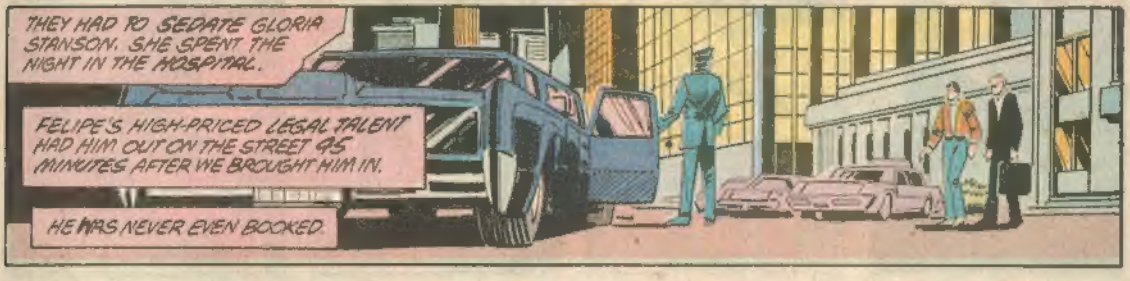
HAD ENOUGH?
Juan! Venir prisa!!
SEÑOR GARCONAS, WHAT IS GOING...
KILL THIS INTRUDER! CUT HIM!
MY PLEASURE, Señor.
COME TO JUAN, MI LIMO POCO.
JUAN'S GOOD WITH THAT BOWIE KNIFE.
TOO GOOD FOR ROBIN TO HANDLE ON HIS OWN.
FORTUNATELY, THE LAD ISN'T ALONE.
Mi Amigo...
...WHY DON'T YOU TRY SOMEONE MORE YOUR OWN SIZE?
HE DECIDES TO TAKE ME UP ON THE OFFER.
PROBABLY THE WORST MISTAKE JUAN EVER MADE.
3

TWENTY SECONDS LATER--
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE ALLOWED YOURSELF TO BE FORCED INTO A CORNER LIKE THAT, LAD.
NEXT TIME, I MIGHT NOT SEE WHERE YOU GO.
BY THE WAY, WHAT BROUGHT YOU IN HERE?
A WOMAN'S SCREAM.
I THINK IT CAME FROM THE BEDROOM.
TAKE A LOOK-SEE.
OH MY GOD...
PLEASE...
PLEASE, DON'T HURT ME!
PLEASE...
4


HALF AN HOUR LATER DOWN AT POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS..
IT WAS JUAN.. HE KIDNAPPED ME AS I GOT OFF WORK... I'M A MODEL...
GLORIA, WAS IT JUAN WHO... ASSAULTED YOU?
NO, HE ONLY BROUGHT ME TO THE APARTMENT BECAUSE FELIPE ORDERED IT.
THEN IT WAS FELIPE WHO DID THIS TO YOU?
YES... THIS IS THE... SECOND TIME HE'S DONE THIS...
WE HAD A DATE... THE FIRST TIME... I DIDN'T KNOW... WHAT HE WAS LIKE...
DID YOU REPORT THE ATTACK TO THE POLICE THAT FIRST TIME?
NO...
WHY NOT?
I WAS... SO ASHAMED..
I WANTED IT... TO ALL GO AWAY... WANTED TO FORGET IT...
WELL, HE WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT THIS TIME, MISS STANSON.
WE CAUGHT HIM DEAD TO RIGHTS.
KIDNAPPING, ASSAULT, RESISTING ARREST...
FELIPE'S ABOUT TO SPEND SOME HARD TIME.

I'M AFRAID YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT THAT, ROBIN.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
FELIPE SAYS MISS STANSON CAME TO THE APARTMENT ON HER OWN, UNINVITED.
THE STORY IS GLORIA GOT HER BLACK EYE BANGING INTO A DOOR WHEN SHE TRIPPED.
HE CLAIMS GLORIA IS TRYING TO CAUSE HIM TROUBLE BECAUSE HE'D BROKEN OFF THEIR AFFAIR.
JUAN BACKS UP THIS STORY
IT'S ALL LIES!
I KNOW, ROBIN. BUT WE CAN'T PROVE IT.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CUT GARZONAS LOOSE.
THIS STINKS.
THE WORST PART OF THIS WHOLE MESS IS THAT EVEN IF WE COULD CRACK THEIR DIRTY LITTLE STORY, IT WOULDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.
WE'D STILL HAVE TO RELEASE FELIPE GARZONAS.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
IT'S FELIPE'S FATHER...
HE'S JOSÉ GARZONAS, THE AMBASSADOR FROM BOSATAGO.
FELIPE HAS DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY! WE CAN'T TOUCH HIM.
6


NO!
NO!
NO!
THEN... THAT MEANS HE CAN... COME AFTER ME AGAIN... ANY TIME HE WANTS...


THEY HAD TO SEDATE GLORIA STANSON. SHE SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE HOSPITAL.
FELIPE'S HIGH-PRICED LEGAL TALENT HAD HIM OUT ON THE STREET 45 MINUTES AFTER WE BROUGHT HIM IN.
HE WAS NEVER EVEN BOOKED.

SOMETIMES, IT JUST DOESN'T WORK OUT THE WAY IT SHOULD.
I WANT THIS GUY, BATMAN.

WELL, YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM...
... AT LEAST, NOT FOR WHAT HE DID TO GLORIA STANSON.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE'RE DONE WITH THAT LITTLE CREEP.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN MIND?

OUR COUNTRY AND FELIPE'S PRESENTLY HAVE A WELL PUBLICIZED ANTI-DRUG OPERATION TAKING PLACE DOWN IN BOGATAGO.
WE'VE SENT FEDERAL MARSHALS TO HELP BOGATAGO ERADICATE THE COCA FIELDS THAT GROW EVERYWHERE OUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AND JUNGLE.
BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH FELIPE?
YOU'VE APPARENTLY BECOME TOO EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED WITH THIS CASE, JASON.
OTHERWISE, YOU WOULD HAVE NOTICED FELIPE'S HYPER-ACTIVITY, SHAKY HANDS AND PIN-POINT PUPILS.
YOU MEAN...
FELIPE WAS STONED WHEN WE BUSTED HIM.
I SUSPECT HE HAD A NOSEFUL OF COCAINE.
IF WE CAN CATCH HIM HOLDING, THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL REQUEST FELIPE'S RECALL TO BOGATAGO.
HE'LL HAVE TO RETURN HOME IN DISGRACE, WITH NO HOPE OF EVER FOLLOWING HIS FATHER INTO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.
THAT'S NOT MUCH OF A PUNISHMENT.
I'M AFRAID IT'S THE BEST WE CAN DO.
8

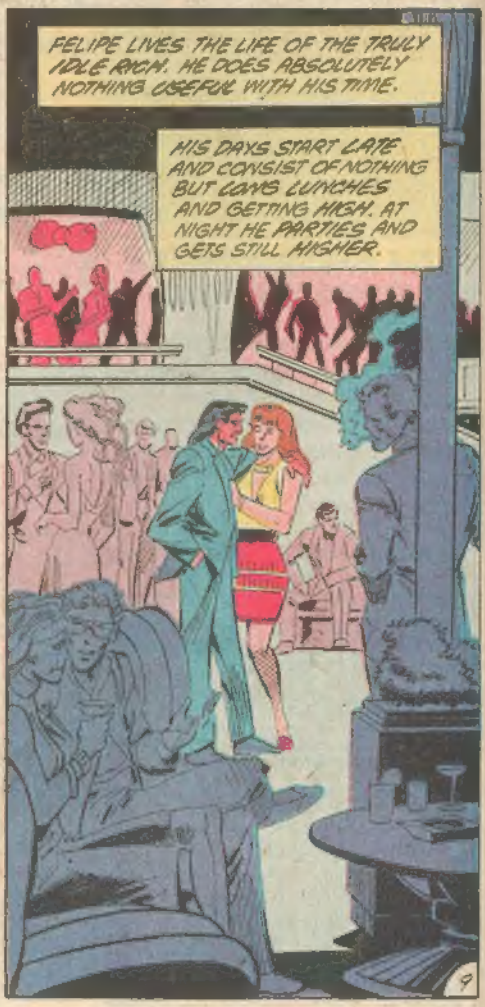
THE BATCAVE.
THE FIRST THING WE NEED TO DO IS LEARN EVERYTHING WE CAN ABOUT FELIPE AND HIS FATHER.
LET'S SEE WHAT THE C.I.A. COMPUTER FILES HAVE.

WELL, LOOK AT THIS!
IT APPEARS JOSÉ GARZONAS IS A POWERFUL RIGHT-WING POLITICAL STRONGMAN DOWN IN BOGATAGO.
THE C.I.A. SUSPECTS HIM OF SMUGGLING COKE INTO OUR COUNTRY.

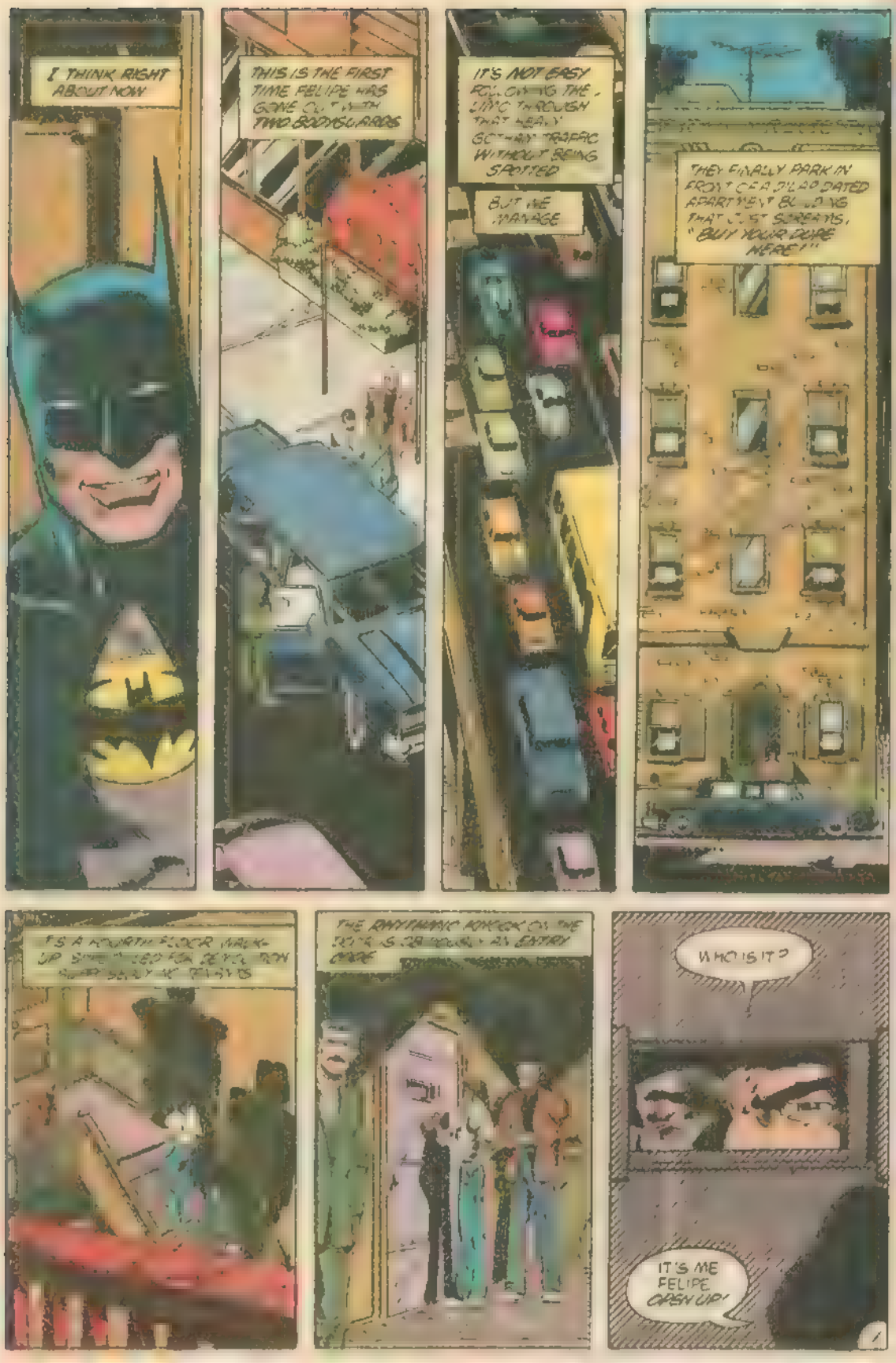
IT SEEMS FELIPE HAS BEEN SAMPLING SOME OF HIS FATHER'S WARES.
I WONDER IF JOSÉ KNOWS?

PROBABLY NOT.
WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
WE WAIT. AND...

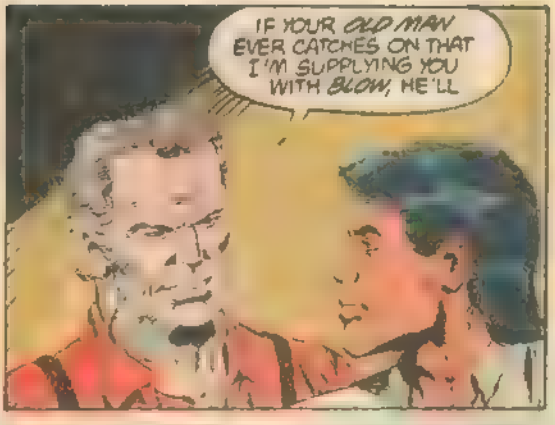
...WE KEEP AN EYE ON LITTLE FELIPE.

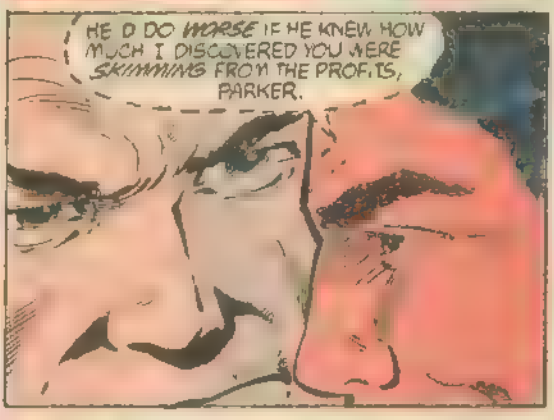

FELIPE LIVES THE LIFE OF THE TRULY IDLE RICH. HE DOES ABSOLUTELY NOTHING USEFUL WITH HIS TIME.
HIS DAYS START LATE AND CONSIST OF NOTHING BUT LONG LUNCHES AND GETTING HIGH. AT NIGHT HE PARTIES AND GETS STILL HIGHER.

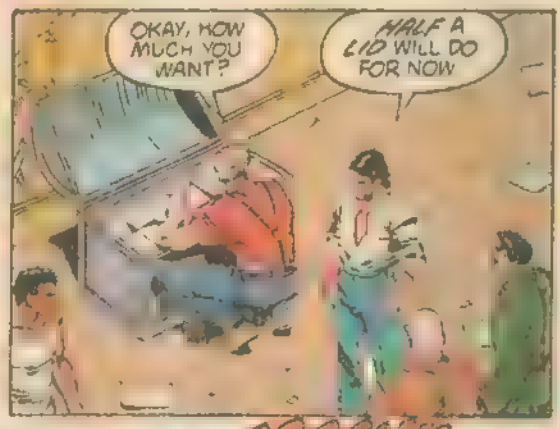
THIS GUY SPENDS MONEY LIKE HE HAS A TREE IT GROWS ON
NOT A TREE, ROBIN IT'S A PLANT
A COCA PLANT
OVER THE NEXT THREE DAYS WE HAVE A DOZEN OPPORTUNITIES TO BUST FELIPE HOLDING.
BUT WE HOLD OFF.
I WANT TO TAKE OUT A PART OF THE SENIOR GARZONAS' OPERATION WHEN FELIPE TAKES HIS FALL
JASON DOESN'T LIKE THIS IDEA
HE HASN'T YET LEARNED THAT NINETY PERCENT OF CRIME-FIGHTING IS WAITING
HE'S GOING TO GET AWAY IF WE DON'T POP HIM NOW!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT HIS FATHER I WANT FELIPE!
I CAN'T STAND JUST SITTING AROUND LIKE THIS!
WHEN'S FELIPE GOING TO MAKE HIS MOVE?
10


I THINK RIGHT ABOUT NOW
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME FELIPE HAS GONE OUT WITH TWO BODYGUARDS
IT'S NOT EASY ROLLING THE LIMO THROUGH THAT HEAVY GOTHAM TRAFFIC WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED
BUT WE MANAGE
THEY FINALLY PARK IN FRONT OF A DILAPIDATED APARTMENT BUILDING THAT JUST SCREAMS, "BUY YOUR DOPE HERE!"
IT'S A FOURTH FLOOR WALK-UP
THE RHYTHMIC KNOCK ON THE DOOR IS THE USUAL ENTRY CODE
WHO IS IT?
IT'S ME FELIPE. OPEN UP!

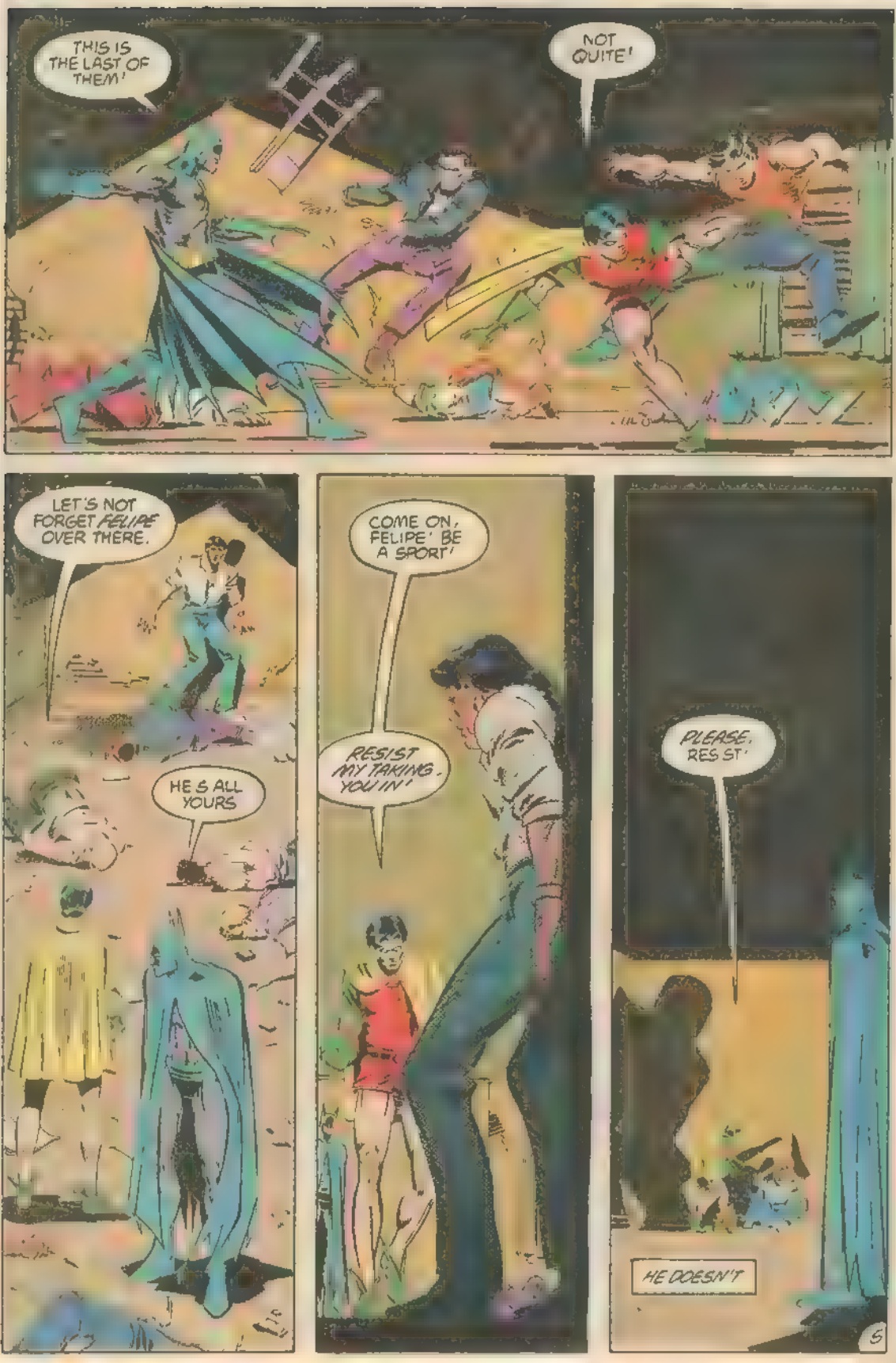
WHAT DO YOU WANT, KID?
MORE NOSE CANDY, PARKER. WHY ELSE WOULD I COME TO THIS DUMP?
THIS IS NO GOOD, FELPE


IF YOUR OLD MAN EVER CATCHES ON THAT I'M SUPPLYING YOU WITH BLOW, HE'LL


HE'D DO WORSE IF HE KNEW HOW MUCH I DISCOVERED YOU WERE SKIMMING FROM THE PROFITS, PARKER.


OKAY, HOW MUCH YOU WANT?
HALF A LID WILL DO FOR NOW

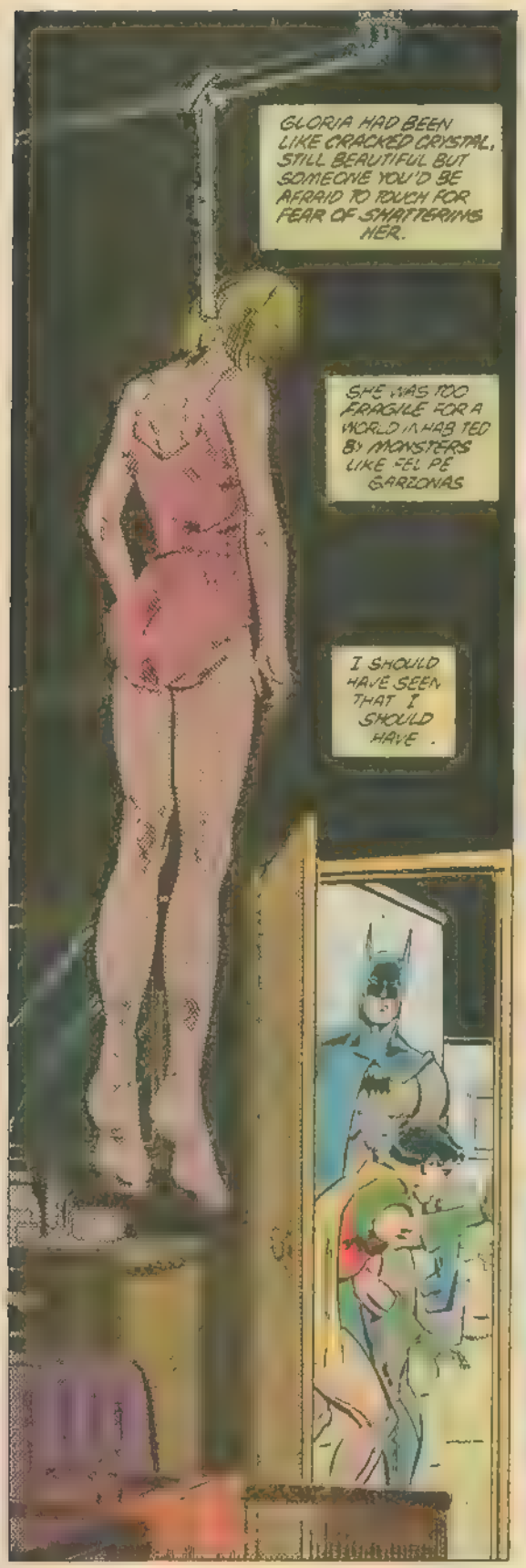
RINGS!


THIS IS THE LAST OF THEM!
NOT QUITE!
LET'S NOT FORGET FELIPE OVER THERE.
HE'S ALL YOURS
COME ON, FELIPE! BE A SPORT!
RESIST MY TAKING YOU IN!
PLEASE, RESIST!
HE DOESN'T
5

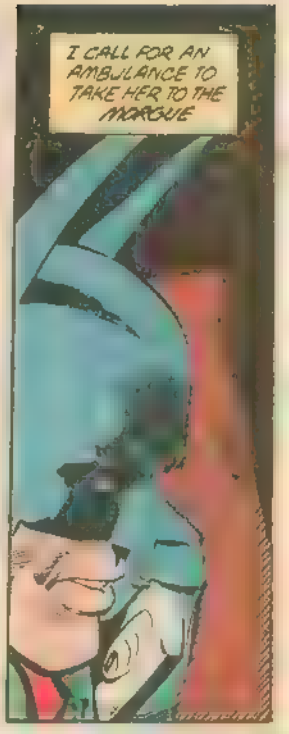
AN HOUR LATER, FELIPE'S LAWYER SPRINGS HIM FROM CUSTODY
BUT THIS TIME JOSÉ'S SON IS BOOKED
WE HAVE TO RELEASE HIM, BUT WASHINGTON'S ALREADY GOTTEN THE WORD
FELIPE'S RECALL IS ONLY DAYS AWAY.
HAVE A NICE TRIP BACK TO BOGATAGO, SCUMBAG
COME ALONG, FELIPE.
LET'S JUST GET OUT OF HERE
UNO MOMENTO!
I HAVE A PHONE CALL TO MAKE BEFORE WE GO
6

IT'S ME ALEJAE DID I WAKE YOU?
ARE YOU LOOKING REALLY FOXY TONIGHT, BABE?
I'LL BE OVER TO SEE YOU LATER TONIGHT
WE'LL TALK MORE THEN, GLORIA HASTA LUEGO
YOU ANIMAL!
YOU DIRTY STALKING ANIMAL!!
LET HIM GO, ROBIN
HE'S NOT WORTH IT
GLORIA THAT POOR GIRL
SHE'S NOT TO BE IN A PHONE!
I'LL GET HER PHONE NUMBER FROM THE ARREST SHEET.
PLEASE GLORIA ANSWER PLEASE
SHE'S NOT PICKING UP.
I DON'T LIKE THIS.

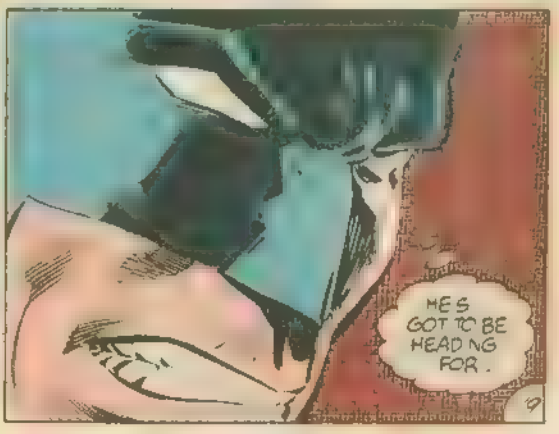
GLORIA'S DOORMAN DOESN'T REMEMBER SEEING HER LEAVE DURING THE PAST HOUR
THERE'S NO ANSWER WHEN WE KNOCK, SO..
GLORIA! IT'S BATMAN AND ROBIN!
EVERYTHING'S OKAY! WHERE ARE YOU?
CHECK THE BEDROOM!
I'LL TAKE THE KITCHEN!
OH, NO
NO
NO


GLORIA HAD BEEN LIKE CRACKED CRYSTAL, STILL BEAUTIFUL BUT SOMEONE YOU'D BE AFRAID TO TOUCH FOR FEAR OF SHATTERING HER.
SHE WAS TOO FRAGILE FOR A WORLD INHABITED BY MONSTERS LIKE FELIPE GARZONAS
I SHOULD HAVE SEEN THAT I SHOULD HAVE.

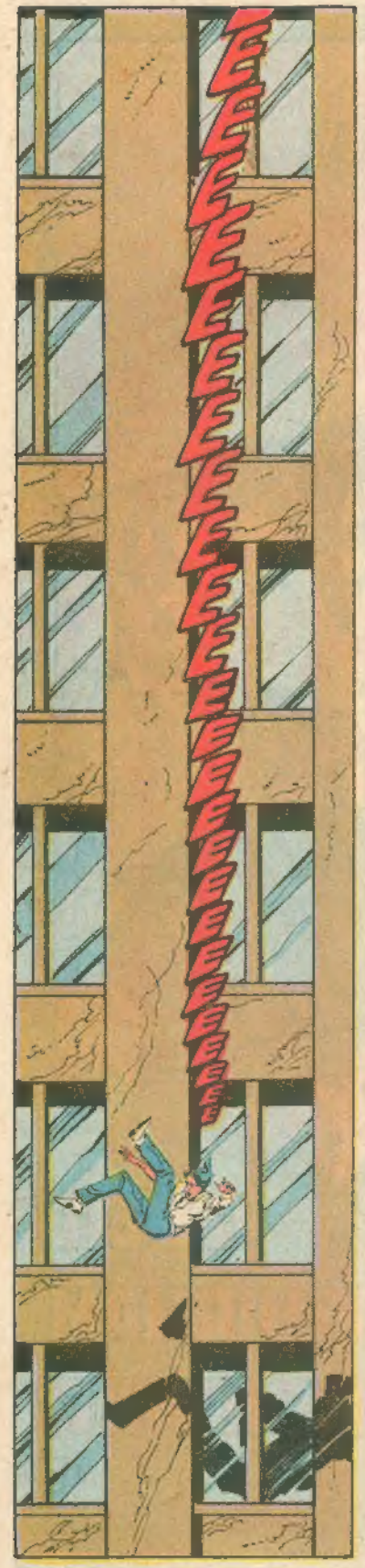
SO MANY SHOULD HAVES BUT DIDN'TS.


I CALL FOR AN AMBULANCE TO TAKE HER TO THE MORGUE

BUT WHEN I GET OFF THE LINE
ROBIN?
GONE.


HE'S GOT TO BE HEADING FOR.

...FELIPE'S APARTMENT
WELL, FELIPE, THE GOOD LIFE WAS SWEET WHILE IT LASTED
ROY'S FEELING
I WILL NOT BE EASY FOR ME BACK IN BOGATAGO FATHER WILL BE FURIOUS
NO MORE
HOW SAD
NO MORE LIBERATED AMERICAN WOMEN, EITHER
I'M GOING TO MISS THOSE SILLY LITTLE CREATURES
AND GOTHAM I'LL MISS THIS LADY ALSO
I WONDER IF I WILL EVER RETURN TO THIS NEON CITY
FELIPE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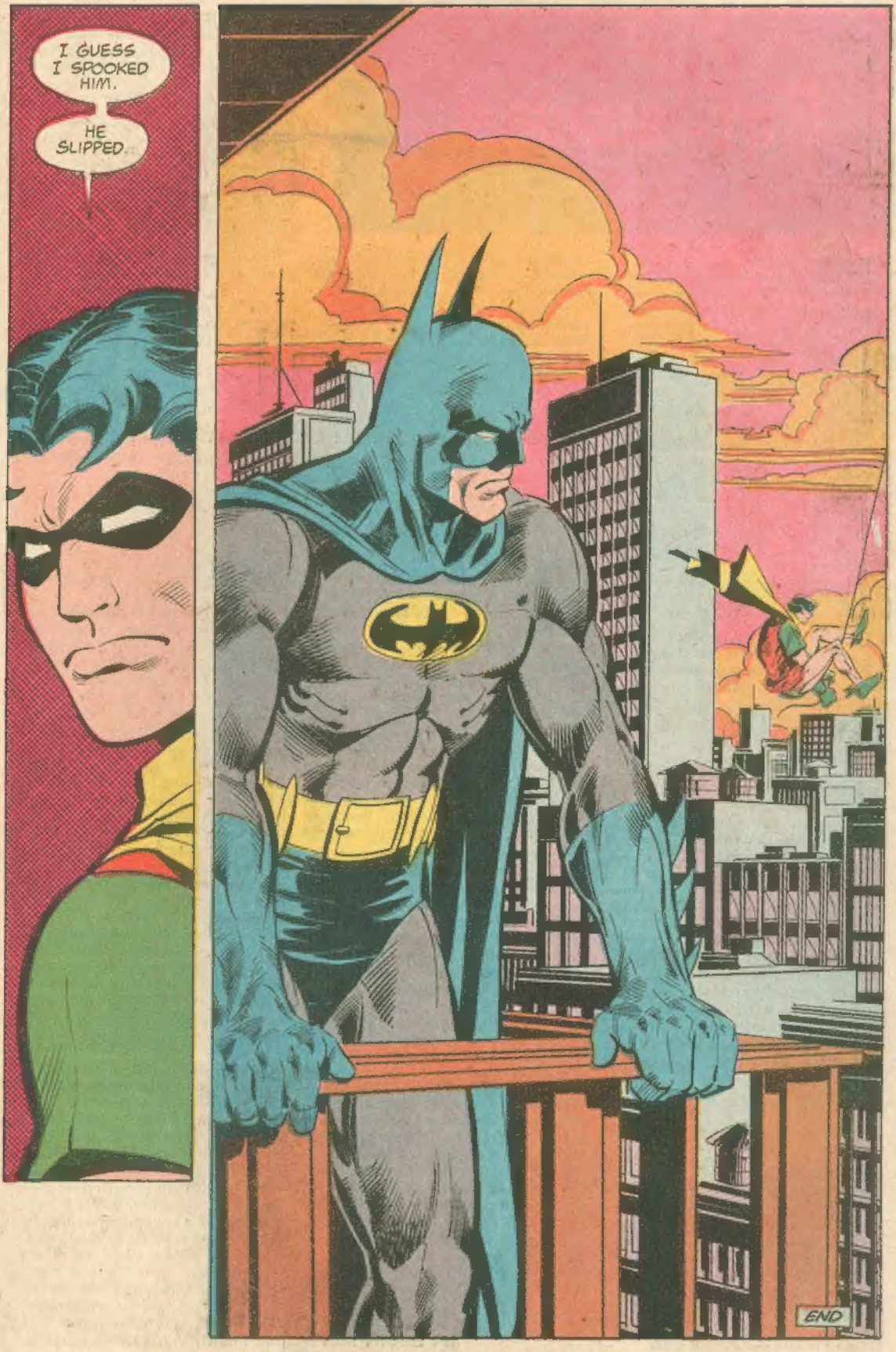
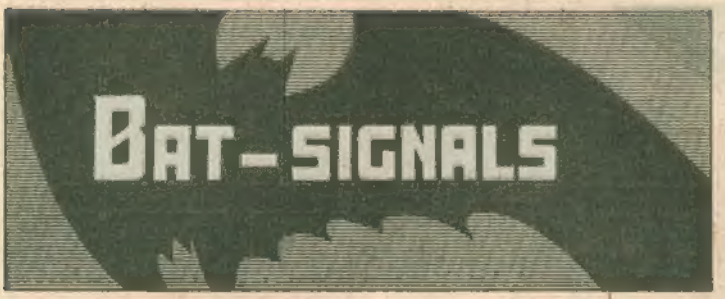

I GUESS I SPOOKED HIM.
HE SLIPPED...
END



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Dear Denny and Dan,

BATMAN #421 was excellent! I've been waiting patiently for the ending to the storyline begun in BATMAN #414, and though I still have to wait one more issue to see the conclusion, I know it will be worth it.

The solution to the killings was complex. Now let's see if I have this right: Victor Giambattista let his cousin Vito Procaccini and his friend Karl Brannek borrow vans held in the police impound for $100 and no questions asked. They used the vans to kill girls. Uh, Jim? Cut down on the crazy last names, willya?

Elmore was a sad soul. He must have been extremely lonely to take that dead woman and make her his wife. I felt great pity for him.

The art was exceptional. This is some of the best stuff I've seen from Dick. Still, I hope for the return of Jim Aparo.

Eric Buscher

Jim Aparo will return, Eric. And what a return it will be, too, starting in BATMAN #426 and continuing the same storyline for at least three issues. Check out the full-page ad this issue for the first facts about this upcoming saga.

*****

Dear Dan and Denny,

Gotham is developing continuity (although I hate to say that "C" word). The fact that the Dumpster Killers were still at it all the while Batman battled the KGBeast adds much-needed cohesion to the Bat-books. I assume Batman knew his way around the sewers (in *Ten Nights of the Beast*) due to his recent encounter with the Ratcatcher in DETECTIVE COMICS #586.

So, regardless of the rotating artist syndrome, having a regular writer and serious editorial handling is working for me. Thanks for making the Batman respectable again. I hope for no more backsliding.

Charlie Harris
Tucson, AZ

*****

Dear Editorial Types,

Well, it looks like either my numerous well-placed letters concerning the lameness of this book paid off, or the writer suddenly came to his senses. Batman is back to the way he ought to be. Once again he is a courageous fighter who is to be revered and feared. I was getting so tired of two-bit hoods constantly getting the drop on him!! Thank you, Jim. I think we're back on the right track.

BATMAN #421 will not go down as a particularly memorable issue, but I felt it established some things in this book that have been sorely missed. For one thing, he proves himself to be a master of self-defense, which he should be. He experienced little or no problems with the gang he encountered or with the various other thugs he met in this issue. In this issue, Batman also returned to the use of his detective skills ("Dried blood?"), something else that was noticeably missing. Oh, yeah, and he did his usual "Help the little people bit" (the old lady and the mugger, remember?). Like I said earlier, it won't go down as one of the all-time greats, but at least the character is returning to his true form.

This is probably not one of the better letters that I have written, but I have to get it in the mail before I have to pay three cents extra for the new postal rates!! I have been severely delayed by a faulty typewriter ribbon, but I have managed to keep plugging away!! One more thing before I go. On the last couple of pages, Batman is caught in this guy's apartment red-handed. Batman then asks the guy if he was involved in the murders. The man then tells him to "prove it." Batman should have slugged him in the chops and said, "Prove that!" Just my own violent opinion. I know he didn't want to get Gordon in trouble, but he could have at least instilled a little fear along the way!! Later.

Kip Talbot
P.O. Box 206
Dayton, VA 22821

Thanks for struggling with that ribbon, Kip, and getting that letter to us. I think that Batman instilled enough fear in Brannek, though, without having to bust him in the chops the first time they met.

*****

Dear Denny,

BATMAN #421 was great. After such a long wait for the end of this plotline, I thought it would fizz out. I was wrong. It just got better. Jim Starlin keeps producing excellent Batman-work, so I hope that you plan to keep him for a long time. The best part of all these stories is that there have been few appearances of Robin, who I think is an insult to the real hero who once wore that costume. Keep up the great work. One question: Can you tell us readers anything about the upcoming Batman movie? I hope that it goes well.

George Gusjihes
100 W. 109 Street Apt. #C2
New York, NY 10025

Well, George, I can tell you that the script is great (I just read it), and that they start filming this coming September (I just heard about it), and that they haven't cast it yet, although they will be filming in London. Umm, what else ... oh, yes. I remember.

The screenwriter for the movie, Sam Hamm, and the editor of the various Batman Books, Dennis O'Neil, have been talking about a certain Caped Crusader. Wouldn't it be neat if we could get these two to put their heads together and come up with a story for BATMAN?

Heh, heh, heh...

*****

Dear Bat-Chroniclers!

The Batman! the man, the myth, the mystery that is the super-hero...

Who is this creature of the night who strikes fear into the hearts of hardened criminals and makes even a good citizen pause? Who is this detective who pursues relentlessly until those who break the law are brought to justice? Who is this one-man fighting machine who hides beneath the cowl and behind the cape? Who is the Batman and what does he stand for?

Many so-called super-heroes, at their best, misunderstand him and shy away. Others, at their worst, ignore him and, perhaps, even laugh. His closest friends utilize his skills and talents when he is needed, yet they barely tolerate his presence when they don't. He is an enigma, a specter that mankind cannot, will not, be a part of. He is alone. Yet, in that respect, he is at his best.

What motivates this man? Why risk life and limb when few offer support and even fewer give thanks? Why strive for a goal that can never be reached, no matter how hard you try? Are personal convictions and self-gratification enough in a world that does not seem to care, or appreciate, anyway?

Imagine, if you will, a man who is never satisfied, a man who is obsessed with the other persona he has adopted. No matter what it takes—the drawing of blood, the exertion of sweat, or the sting of tears—he will not fail in the unforgiving task he has put upon himself. He will search. He will fight. He will ply his trade until utterly exhausted, if need be. Yet remember: he is not inhuman, although he may appear to be. He is not uncaring, although it seldom shows. He is not indestructible.

Who is the Batman and what does he stand for? I do not profess to understand this man or to explain the existence of the hero. I merely wish to make a statement,

whether right or wrong. He is the Batman: nightstalker, man-hunter and the personification of all things that are dark. He is what he is, and forever will be. I, for one, am grateful. You, on the other hand, can make your own personal judgments.

Roger D. Case
1199 Waterfront Drive #202
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Thanks, Roger.

That's a great letter.

I figure that since this is, indeed, the BATMAN letter column, here would be a good place to let fans who wrote letters about THE KILLING JOKE air their opinions. Here's a sample of the many letters we received.

*****

Dear Denny,

If BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE were live theater, I'd be giving all contributing talents a standing ovation and would be tossing money.

Over the years, various versions of the Joker have seen him depicted as a mere criminal, a prankster, a punster, a clown, a hardened killer and a homicidal maniac. And yes, he's often portrayed as being insane. But something was always missing—something that this prestige novel supplied: the substance of the Joker insanity. Until now, we'd seen only its form. Now we see its substance.

The end was touching, with the Joker choosing to stay insane rather than risk a partial sanity.

The card on the back cover suggests how the Joker and the Batman are two sides of the same coin: yea, even two halves of the same card. I'll never look at the Joker the same way again.

And if this were a live show, the "Go Loony" song would be the showstopper. I even sang it out loud.

Art Vidro
241 Maple Place
Mineola, NY 11501

*****

Dear Bat-Guys,

I just finished reading THE KILLING JOKE, and it lived up to all the hype surrounding its release, but the real comics event of the month was Dick Giordano's return to BATMAN in issue #421. I have always enjoyed his rendition of the Dark-night Detective, so the issue was a pleasant surprise. Thanks for getting Mr. Giordano to hop on for this two-issue stint. I would also like to thank Jim Starlin for coming up with a story that maintained the quality of the KGBeast saga. There was none of the letdown that usually follows such epic stories. Mr. Starlin kept up the momentum with excellent characterization. Batman's frustration at his inability to end the murders shot out from the page. This was great—too often it seems as if the Batman doesn't care. Here we saw the incredible pain he feels with every loss of an innocent life. I've got to go now, so thanks once again for BATMAN #421—I can't wait for the conclusion.

Charles Rhett Anderson

Thanks, Charles Rhett. I really like Dick's rendition of the Batman, too. Are you getting this, Dick?

On a final note, several issues ago, we ran a piece written by a fan of Batman. We got some good responses to it, so we're gonna do it again! That's all I've got to say this month, folks, so write in, and I'll see you later.

Take care!

—Dan Raspler
Assistant Editor

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GLASS BULLETS
by Kevin Harkins

As I stand on this dark and dirty rooftop, the smell of gasoline and pollution filter up and around me, forming an almost tangible aura of grime.

A harsh November wind whips against my skintight uniform, giving me a chill that's more than just cold. It's cold mixed with anticipation, and the sweet scent of my own fear. I wrap my cloak about me, ever tightening.

This is Gotham City.

Below me, pushers sell their deadly prescriptions and homeless babies scream into the night. Their cries go unheard, their warnings unheeded.

This is my city.

The out-of-towners call it "Gotcha City" because the teenage muggers walk right up to you and take your belongings like inner-city valets...

Three blocks away, a gun is fired.

My eyes narrow.

My pulse quickens.

The hunt is about to begin.

I leap across the street that would be a lot brighter if all the lights hadn't been smashed by nineteen-year-old punks and 40-year-old drunks.

I grasp the fire escape of the building on the other side. From there, I jump onto a telephone wire. That wouldn't be there if this was uptown.

I slide along the wires, careful not to touch the wires and the poles at the same time. That would mean sudden death.

At my destination, another gunshot rings from a crumbling brownstone. The fourth floor.

I hook my line onto the roof and leap toward the window. The nylon rope bites into my gloved fingers.

I smash into the window feet first. Wood and glass fly everywhere, shattered by my boots. I move away from the window before I become a target.

From the shadows, I survey the situation. A young girl, about twelve, is holding a gun on her mother. The girl is shaking and sweating, high on something.

Her mother is wounded in the left shoulder, a pock-mark in the wall beyond her.

I come from beyond the girl. I apply pressure to the scapula bone in her shoulder. She passes out.

The mother sees me and screams. She screams that I killed her baby. Forgetting her own wound, she cradles the junkie in her arms. She cries.

The love of a mother.

I never knew it...

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From the Den

I met a nice man in the dining car of Amtrak's Broadway Limited en route from New York to Chicago. He lives in a small town in Indiana and he sells custom vehicles to police departments, hospitals, animal shelters and the like. When I told him that I'm the guy who edits BATMAN, he was curious, delighted and surprised. He said he thought Batman stopped existing after the live-action television show went off the air in 1968. He hadn't seen a comic book in years and he seemed happy to learn that they're still being published.

Sometimes, we tend to strut. We constantly see our names in print, we get invited to stores and conventions, people occasionally ask for our autographs. But nice men in small Indiana towns don't even know that Batman is still around, much less who writes and draws and edits the stories about him.

It's useful to have things put in perspective.

DENNIS

STOP (or at least slow down) THE PRESSES: The results of the annual Comics Buyer's Guide poll just arrived and in the favorite editor category ... I didn't win. I came in second, which is certainly flattering enough for anyone. But—the No. 1 editor, according to Buyer's Guide readers, is my old friend and ex-assistant Mark Gruenwald, of Marvel Comics. Mark deserves the honor. The kid's become a real pro. And the kid, though he won't know it until he reads these words, is paying for lunch next time we meet; we also-rans have to have some consolation.

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